

HISPANIC FEDERATION

June 30, 2004

Chairman Michael Powell
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: MB Docket No. 04-207

Dear Commissioners:

The goal of the Hispanic Federation is to meet the growing needs of the Latino community through education, healthcare, voter registration and other forms of assistance. As such, I feel it incumbent upon me to write this Commission concerning the issue of "*a la carte*" cable pricing; a policy that, if enacted, would have adverse effects on those for whom my organization cares the most.

In Docket 04-207, you ask for comments on several issues. I will limit my comments to the matter of *a la carte*'s effects on the diversity of cable programming.

The number of Latino roles on television is alarmingly low – roughly 4% of the characters on TV today. And while the explosion over the past decade or so of new, independent cable networks has helped this situation, more work lays ahead; the number of positive, non-stereotypical roles for Hispanics remain in even shorter supply.

Up-and-coming networks like SÍTV are helping to bridge this gap with original programming aimed not just at the Latino audience but also to viewers at large. The importance of such networks is two-fold: not only can Latinos see reassuring portrayals of their own cultural identity, but non-Latinos will be exposed to images of our communities beyond the stereotypes of mainstream media.

It is for this reason that the Hispanic Federation opposes forcing the *a la carte* option on consumers. Primarily, as experts have publicly agreed, it is less likely that the average non-Latino viewer would select a network billed as "programming for Latinos/Hispanics," which

would limit the number of viewers of these positive messages. Further, without guaranteed access to viewers' homes, upstart networks would find it difficult to raise sufficient capital from investors and advertisers to launch in the first place, eliminating, one by one, the number of voices on cable.

This Commission has an opportunity to make sure that this doesn't happen. By raising to Congressional inquirers the risk *a la carte* poses to Latino communities, I believe that the Commission can preserve the cable platform's ability to promote new voices and more positive images for Hispanics – it is in our community's interest and the public's interest to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez

President

Hispanic Federation